

## **Discussion of Exit Report at Institutional Accreditation Visits**

### **October 2014**

#### **Overview**

This item provides information for discussion regarding potential changes to the Exit Report at the conclusion of Institutional Accreditation Visits.

#### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the information presented below be discussed and the proposed change to the exit report be approved.

#### **Background**

There are approximately 35-40 accreditation site visits each year. The visits vary in length and number of programs reviewed and the site visit teams are relative to the size of the institution. All Common Standards are reviewed and team members engage in program sampling to gather evidence regarding an institution's ability to meet common and program standards.

The average length of a site visit is 2.5 days, during which time the majority of day time is spent in interviews with constituent groups. In the evenings, site visit teams meet to discuss findings gleaned from written and digital documents as well as information from interviews, and engage in deliberation to determine whether common and program standards are met, not met, or met with concerns. The team must also reach consensus to make an accreditation recommendation to the COA. Once decisions have been reached, team members draft the report which currently is left with the institution.

Staff is proposing a pilot to change to what is currently left as the exit report. Rather than a full narrative that is a draft of the report (that COA receives in final form), this approach suggests that the institution be provided with a summary document. This proposal addresses two major concerns raised over the years. First, there is concern that because of the need to draft the report, important deliberations may be being rushed. This could be especially significant with struggling institutions or challenging accreditation visits. Relieving a team of having to have all the narrative in place before the end of the visit would allow the team more time for deliberation and careful consideration of all the evidence presented by the institution.

Second, this approach would provide team members and staff consultants additional time to edit the report prior to providing it to the institution. Review teams and team leads have often reported that the short timeline in which to produce a document makes for a challenging environment in which to operate. Review team members routinely put in long exhausting hours of work after a full day of interviewing, working late into the evening and early morning and often the final draft product left with the institution contains significant errors and omissions that would be avoided if provided even a few days longer for review.

The Accreditation Handbook, Chapter 7(p 11) states,

#### *Exit Report*

*By mid-morning or early afternoon, the team presents a summary of its findings and the recommendation to the institution. The institution may invite anyone to attend this presentation of the report. Usually, the team lead and state consultant hold a private briefing meeting with the dean or director to provide a review of the report and answer any questions.*

Staff believes such an approach would be consistent with the existing Accreditation Handbook language cited above. The proposed Exit Report would include the following elements:

- Accreditation Recommendation
- Recommended Stipulations (if any)
- Accreditation Team Member List
- Documents Reviewed
- Findings for each Common Standard
- CS Rationales (if any)
- Findings for Program Standards
- PS Rationales (if any)

The proposed timeline for the report is as follows:

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Reporting Activity</b>
At Conclusion of Visit	The team presents a summary of its findings and the recommendation to the institution.  Team members MUST leave draft reports with Consultant
Within 5 Working Days of Visit	Team members finalize reports and submit them to Consultant/Team Lead.
Within 10 Working Days of the Visit	Draft Report is forwarded to the Institution for Correction of Fact.
Within 15 Working Days of the Visit	Institution returns report to Consultant who finalizes it for COA Agenda
Within 2 Months of the Visit	COA determines Accreditation Decision

At times, the above timeline may be shortened if the institution and team lead have chosen the next regularly scheduled COA meeting to present and the timeline for production and posting for that meeting is a shorter timeframe than that above. This would be allowable.

#### **Next Steps**

If the COA approves of the proposed change to the Exit Report, staff will disseminate information to Institutions, Site Visit Team Leads and Team Members. The COA will reassess how well this process worked at the conclusion of site visits in 2015 to determine whether to continue this practice into the future.